

NRO - SATELLITE SYSTEMS

Memo for DCI from Wheelon

23 Nov 1964

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In analyzing the McMillan proposal submitted by Secretary Vance for a study of new satellite systems, following points are relevant:

a. The first objective of the NRO group would usurp the USIB/COMOR CHARTER by requesting that it (1) examine the specific needs for search and/or surveillance information, and (2) determine the resulting technical and operational criteria which must be met to fulfill these needs.

b. The final report is to be rendered late Feb. It will provide preparation of conceptual developmental plans for search and/or surveillance systems. The bulk of the study effort must therefore be accomplished prior to the demonstration of technical feasibility for [redacted] Since these are the most advanced systems, other systems evaluated by the grp will be more in the nature of advertisements, and the entire study will be in the nature of a forecast.

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c. The basic terms of reference of the grp suggest that standardization is a desirable thing and state that systems which become operational in 1968 are the prime objective. Since [redacted] are intended to have their first flights in FY 1966, it would seem that the late date and implied suggestion of TITAN III, as an all-purpose boost vehicle, represent an unsatisfactory reference frame.

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d. The concept that any dissemination of the results of this study past the specific committee will be controlled solely by the D/NRO means that CIA as a whole will not have a chance to participate in the program and that you will be confronted as an individual with a fait accompli.

e. The teams which will compose both the primary group and its supporting staff are composed of two CIA people and six AF or DOD individuals.

f. This major undertaking would be launched only a week prior to the reconsideration of a major realignment of the NRO structure to which I understand Mr. McNamara has agreed.

" 2. It is our considered view that the McMillan plan which Secretary Vance has put forward for your concurrence is inimical to the interests of CIA participation in the satellite portion of the NRP. To accept this proposal is equivalent to a vote of confidence in the working of the present NRO system."

3. I recommend that you respond to Mr. Vance in the negative, citing your specific agreement with Mr. McNamara for the reorganization of the NRO and as many of the substantive points above as you deem necessary.

NRO review(s) completed.

/s/ Albert D. Wheelon